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A

PROPOSAL

FOR

Regulating and Advancing

THE

Woollen Manufacture,

AND TO

Make it more Profitable

TO THE

Merchant and *Maker*,

Than formerly.

Humbly offered, to the Honourable,

Knights, *Citizens*, and *Burgesses* in Parliament Assembled:

By One who hath had 30 Years Experience in that Trade, and in Importing of Wool from *Ireland*.

Printed in the Year 1698.

BRITISH MUSEUM

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A Deſcription *of the Woollen Manufacture under theſe five Heads*, viz.

Broadcloths,

Karſies,

Perpetuana's,

Bays,

Stuffs.

Broadcloths *are white, dyed, or mixt; white and dyed are moſt Exported, mixt are about half Exported, and half worn at home.*

Karſies, *as many Exported as worn at home.*

Perpetuana's *or* Serges *are white dyed and mixt, white and dyed are moſt exported; mixt, about five Exported and one worn at home.*

Bays, Cottons, *and* Pennyſtones *are white, and dyed, and moſt Exported.*

Stuffs *are innumerable for ſorts, and many Exported.*

The

The Occasion of the ſuppoſed decay of Trade.

THE multitude of hands in the Manufacture produce ſuch vaſt quantities of Goods, as glut all foreign Markets, and the Makers dealing beyond their Stocks do force their Cloths upon the Merchant faſter than they can be ſold, by which means the Merchant beats down the price.

Our Wool is alſo exported both from *England* and *Ireland*, without which other Countries cannot make a good piece of Cloth, but with one Pack of ours they work up four Packs of their own, and do help to fill up foreign Markets.

The Merchant drawing Bills at diſadvantageous Exchange before his Goods are ſold, the Factor to honour the Bills, ſells the Cloth at any price, by which means our Drapery is ſold in foreign Markets for little Profit, and in ours many times for none at all, ſo that we drive a great Trade with little advantage.

The deceitfull making of our Broad Cloths, Kerſies and Stuffs will infallibly

ruin the Trade if not prevented. If the Merchant abates 6 *d.* on a Piece of long Ell, against the next Market the Maker hath left out a Reare of his Pieces, which is so many Threads of the Warp, and renders the Piece one or two Shillings worse, and the Merchant many times perceives it not presently, but lends them away for the same sorts.

Another remarkable occasion of the Discredit of our Drapery, is our not half scowring them out of the Oyl or Grease, by which means the Colour looks dull, and they are not half milled. But the greatest mischief, and that which will infallibly ruin all, if not prevented, is the Sess, being a strong stick with Setter-hooks, to which they fasten one end of the Serge, and the other end they fasten in the Rack or Setter, and 3 or 4 men with all their might stretch the Serge while it is wet, and so stretch or fix it in the Rack, by which means they either break the heart of the Cloth or Serge, and make it often longer than it was in the Loom: but if the heart be not broken, it will shrink so when it comes into a Garment and takes wet, as will absolutely render the Garment useless.

For

For Remedy of all theſe Abuſes in the Trade, and to make it profitable to the Nation in General.

THE Merchants are ſo uſed to the Seea, that an Act of Parliament alone will not regulare it, unleſs ſome ſmall fine be impoſed, and an Inſpector appointed for every County, to look after the deceinfull making and dreſſing of the ſaid Cloths; and to keep up the Standard in making, every long Kerſy, and ſuch others as ſhall be thought fit, may be enjoyned to put the number of the Warp of his Cloth in the Forrel, this will keep up the price when they keep up the goodneſs, and the Cloths will ſell by the number without ſeeing them, and there may be a little Fine upon a miſs Number, and the Inſpector ſhould be to ſee ſuch Cloths number'd as are appointed to be ſo, and to looks after the Dreſſing, that a Serge be not ſtretch'd but by one Man, and that they are perfectly waſhed out of the Greaſe, for which he may be allowed ſix Pence on a Pack, to be paid for him by the Exportors at the Cuſtom-houſe and at the Clerks to the Carryers or Wagons, who ſhall be accountable for it.

The next main Point is to prevent glutting the Markets abroad; and if we do this, our Goods will yield our own Price there.

For Remedy hereof, let us follow the good example of *Norwich*, and prohibit all Makers from weaving any Piece of Cloth, Bays, Sergey, or Stuff, from the tenth Day of *July* to the twentieth Day of *August*, which shall be in every Year; this may also be the work of the said Inspector. This being observed, the Weavers will be helpfull in saving the Hay and Corn Harvest, and the glut of Goods will be the better consumed abroad, so that a quick Trade will follow all Winter, and the Weaver will be better able to live in time of Harvest than in Winter, for now they often want work in Winter, which this will prevent.

Another way to prevent glutting the Markets abroad, is to consume what we can of the Manufacture at home without prejudice.

And first, 'tis observable, that we have no Wooll from *Spain* in any other than wollen Pack-Cloths.

If

If no Wooll be Imported from *Ireland*, or carried to any Market or place of Sale in *England* in any other than Wollen or Linſey-woolſey Pack-Cloths upon Forfeiture. If no Woollen Manufacture be pack'd or ſent abroad in any other than Woollen or Linſey-woolſey Pack-Cloths, theſe will be as ſtrong and as cheap as thoſe now uſed, and will conſume above thirty thouſand Packs of Wooll every Year, and prevent ſo much Goods from coming into foreign Markets, by which means, though we ſend leſs Goods abroad, we ſhall have better and ſpeedier Returns than now; the looking after this alſo may be the work of the ſame Inſpector. Our Drapery will then ſell at any Price, but if the Markets are ſtill cram'd with Goods they will not ſell at all, but as hunger is the beſt ſauce, ſo it will procure any Price, for when our Veſſels are ſtopt, as they are often by the Froſt abroad; as ſoon as they come, the People take the Goods at what price the Merchant puts upon them.

Another way to improve our Manufacture, is effectually to hinder the Exportation of Wooll.

For

For preventing of which, from *England* and *Ireland*, let there be provided and secured to the Informers a Reward of fifty Pounds for every Person which on their Discovery shall be convicted of being aiding or assisting in the Exportation of Wooll; and one hundred Pounds for each Merchant, Imployer or Master of a Vessel, which Money may be paid them out of the Exchequer, and may be levied again upon the Persons convict, who shall also stand outlawed from the time of their Conviction, during Life; and if they cannot pay their respective Fines, the Merchant shall pay it for them. Let the Informers be secure of Pardon, Protection, and Reward, and it will be impossible for any Man to export Wooll, for they employ 20 or 30 Men to ship it by Night, and he that employs them must ever after be a Slave to every Man he employs, and if he gives them not at any time what they ask, they presently inform, and get 1000 on a 500*l.* so that if this be but enacted, the Money will never come to be paid, for no Man will ever attempt to export Wooll again; there may be also with it a Pardon for all past Offences,

Another

Another way to hinder Exportation of Wooll from Ireland.

It is high Treaſon in *Ireland* to export any Wooll out of that Kingdom, ſo that we take Licences from the Lord Deputy, which are granted only for a thouſand Stone, and run after this manner, *viz.* Enter A. B. *to export a thouſand Stone of Wooll, on his giving Security to land it in England, and paying* 4 d. ½ *the Stone Cuſtom.* To diſcharge this Bond and Security, we bring a Return from the Cuſtom-houſe in *England*, that ſuch Wooll was landed, ſuch a Day, out of ſuch a Veſſel; and for want of this Return in 6 Months, the Bond is forfeited.

The Forfeitures of theſe Bonds were given by King *Charles* the Second, to by Patent, bearing date

I have been informed by a worthy Gentleman at *Kells*, that the Merchants who have ſhip'd Wooll, and given Security to land it in *England*, have, in a publick Coffee-houſe, agreed for the Forfeitures of their Bonds before the Veſſels have ſailed.

This Information is likely to be true, for that Wooll is often Exported and the Bonds ſeldom proſecuted, is moſt apparent.

To prevent which mischief, the said Patent being prejudicial to the Nation in general, ought to be declared void by the Exceptions therein, or else the Patentee should give Security for due Prosecution.

Also the Collector or some other Officer of such Port as any Vessel shall enter Wooll in for *England* should be required immediately upon such Entry, to advise the Officers of the Port for which the Wooll is entered, of the Name and Burthen of the Vessel, the Name and Habitation of the Master, the Names and Number of his Men and Boys, the Marks and Numbers of the Bags of Wooll, and the Number of Stone which he hath enter'd; so that if he come not to the said Port in a reasonable time, the Officers may look after him, and when found, if the Wooll be not on board him, or Certificate, that by Stress of Weather, he hath landed it in some other Port of *England*, his Vessel may be seized and condemned to the Officer; and the Seal of the Custom-house where he took in the Wooll, with all the chief Officers hands to it, may be allowed to be evidence against him, for the Officers cannot come *viva voce*, to leave their places to condemn him; he may also

ſo be liable to a hundred Pound Forfeiture, and be out-lawed during Life.

To ballance the Trade with Ireland, *that* Ireland *may Trade without Prohibition and not injure* England.

How much in the Pound Weight Cloths may be made and afforded cheaper in Ireland *than in* England, *if they had our skill and ſettlement of Trade.*

Every Stone of Wooll containing ſixteen Pound Imported from *Ireland* to *England*, pays for Licence 1 *s.* 4 *d.* for Duty 4 *d.* 4, for Freight 4 *d.* $\frac{1}{2}$, Commiſſion 4 *d.* Bags 3 *d.* Cariage from *Birtheford* to *Exon* 4 *d.* in all 3 *s.* and the Merchant or Importer will uſually get 1 *s.* the Stone by it, which is 4 *s.* and is 3 *d.* the Pound Weight; and there muſt be allowed a Pound and half of Wooll in the Fleece to make a Pound Weight of Cloth, which is 4 *d.* $\frac{1}{2}$ on a Pound of Cloth. Then if I buy a hundred Pounds worth of Cloth in *Ireland* for 84 *l.* in *England*, I receive 100 *l.* in *Ireland*, which is 4 *d.* $\frac{1}{2}$ more on a Pound of Cloth, ſo that had they our experience in Trade, we could buy Bays and ordinary Goods 9 *d.* on a Pound weight cheaper in *Ireland* than in *England*; but if the beſt Maker

in

in *England* did ſet up Trade in *Ireland*, he could not work up his Cloth ſo cheap, nor ſo well in *Ireland* as in *England* by 3 *d.* the Pound, for if he drives a conſiderable Trade, he muſt employ a thouſand Hands, and they are not ſo enured to Trade as in *England*, though they grow daily; for the planting of a Trade, is as the planting of an Orchard, which is more profitable to the Son, than to the Father that planted it.

It may be modeſtly accounted, that if ſix Pence the Pound weight be put upon the Manufacture of *Ireland* over and above what is or ſhall be in *England*; they might alſo Trade with little or no Prejudice to *England*, which Duty might be appropriated to *England* for Support of the Government; and this I humbly conceive will prove no Prohibition.

With all humble Submiſſion I would lay down the effects of theſe Regulations of our Trade.

Where-ever our Goods come after theſe Regulations, it will be adviſed, that the Parliament of *England* have ordered, that all our Goods be made Proof, that they will not ſhrink as formerly, and that no Man can be cheated, for that the number of the Warp is on the Forrel of every Cloth,

Cloth, and Fines are ſet upon all that do not obſerve theſe Laws, and that they may be duly put in Execution, Superviſors are appointed by the Parliament to ſee the exact Obſervation: This will advance our Goods at leaſt five Pounds the Pack, when they ſhall not coſt 5. s. the Pack more than now.

The Caſe of the City of Exon, *in reſpect of the Prohibition of* Iriſh *Wool from that Port.*

Firſt, The Trade of that City depends mainly upon *Iriſh* Wooll. All the Wooll thereabouts will not maintain the Trade one Month, and they can land the *Iriſh* Wooll no nearer than *Bitheford* or *Minehead*, the neareſt of which is 30 Miles, and the ways are ſo bad, that no Horſe can travel half the Winter.

Secondly, Since the Memory of Man, it hath not been proved, that any Man of that City did export Wooll, and as to others tranſporting it under pretence of bringing it about [illegible] Land for *Exon*; I hope the methods I have propoſed will prevent, if not, why may not a Veſſel bound for *Bitheford* or *Minehead*, after they are at Sea out of ſight of Land, as

well

well go for *France*, as they might if bound for *Topsham*?

Thirdly, The City of *Exon* is a City of as fine Trade, as any City in *England* of its bigneſs, and this Prohibition was deſigned in favour to the City of *Exon*; but ſeeing it plainly appears, that, if continued, will be the ruin of that City, it ought to be taken into the ſerious conſideration of this Honourable Houſe.

FINIS.

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